

## [Folklore of Stage People]

Duplicate

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Terry Roth

ADDRESS 47 West 69th Street, N.Y.C.

DATE February 15, 1939

SUBJECT Folklore of Stage People

1. Date and time of interview February 14, 1939 11 A.M. — 4 P.M.
2. Place of interview W.P.A. Vaudeville Unit
3. Name and address of informant Not to be mentioned.
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant. George Neagle Above address
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

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Usual dismal loft - and decorations found on all W.P.A. premises.

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

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DATE February 15, 1939

SUBJECT Folklore of Stage People

"Lookit him, how sore he is. Is he burned up, up there. You know why? Well - someone sent him a valentine this mawning. Of a real ham, just like he is. With spats on, and his fancy vest, smoking a big cigar, and I bet it don't smell good neither. And with a cane. And under the picshur, it says under it: If you got on Broadway today you'd have plenty of eggs to go with this Ham. Jeezez! Is he burned up about it."

When you ast me to think back, I don like to do that. It makes me too [bad?]. With you writers, honey, most of you are young, you didn't have all the money and glory we had. But I guess they can't take it away from me. I had everything. I was a beautiful kid in the Follies, and then I had the love of a wonderful husband, Schenck. You know — Van and Schenck. Ah'ma great student of the Bible, honey, just a good student of the Bible. It's the only thing I read. I always say there's no better reading than the Bible. It keeps me just as I am. We owe everything to somebody and don't kid yourself, there's a supreme Bein'.

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When God has taken everything from you, my mother, my husband, there's little love left that brings you closer to Him than before.

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Would you believe it, honey, but my real hobby is cookin' and house work. I really mean it. Just put me in an apartment with all the furniture shoved to one side. And I kin be so happy just movin' it around and fixing up. I keep house with my sister, honey, and she always sez, when she comes home she never knows where the piano is. Ah'am always re-decoratin'. You know, honey, I usta be a dancer, a ballroom dancer. And when I was in the Follies, Fanny Brice had a hobby. She usta make all our clothes. Yes, honey, she'd go out and get the material and work it out on us between the shows and in the evening the dress was ready. Honey, that wuz her pastime. And W.C. Fields usta drive us crazy, playing with one string on an old cigar box. That wuz when he wasn't playin' Badminton. The reason I like housework is I think it's an outlet, honey, for nerves. It brings my mind in harmony with the spirit and that's the only outlet. And when I'm doin' housework it't like bending and stretchin' in rehearsal.

Doin' nothin' is bad for people. Like today. We're makin' up time for yesterday. Sure. We gotta sit in here all day long, doin' nothing. I can't do anything 'cause my dancin' partner, he gotta Pink Slip. So today they tell me, soon I'll have another partner. It's a cryin' shame the way the people won't let you live. Now you take actors. They're a funny lot. They always wuz interested in themselves only. Did they ever want to be interested in a union or something to keep them together? Now, down,here, everybody is interested in the union. The depression DID teach us somethin' honey. That is, that we gotta fight hard to keep alive. You know, dearie, \$22.77 is little enough. Thank God I gotta few friends, they make a little more'n they need. So I get some clothes from them. I support my sister, and we both love shows, honey, but we can't 3 to go to them. Sometimes I come home and say to her, let's see a movie, so we go on Saturday afternoon, when it's 20 cents. But it ain't the same like in the evening, with the kids screamin' all over the place. And when you come out in the sunshine, it don't seem right to be inside durin' the day. So I don't go a lot. Lots

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of times we get two packs of cigarettes for a quarter, and sit home listenin' to the radio, and that's good entertainment.

Lookit, how do you like these colors. It's for my afghan. It's gonna have all different colors, like this one. See. I use the pink on the outside and next to it the green and there's blue and orange here. Ah'm rippin' this all out. I don't like that yellow and red next to each other, what do you think, honey? Don't you think it'll be nice to cover yourself up when you're restin'. The wool sheds a little, but it's no worse than havin' a dog around. That's another thing I love. Dogs. I always have them. Now I have the most adorable terrier, but I had a very big English sheep dog. You know, honey, he was so ugly he was beautiful, and when I walked on the street, why, dearie the people got outta their cars and come up to look at him. He died from a germ when he was nine years old. You know, he weighed 95 pounds. When I first got him, my husband was alive and we had a mansion out in Hollywood and that dog had acres to play in. The when everything went smash, honey, I took him back to New York with me and all my friends said what a shame to keep that big dog in a tiny apartment. So I had some friends in the country in Jersey and I took him out there and left him. Well, honey, when I came out to see him he just looked at me so sad, as if to say, "don't you ever leave me again." So I brought him back with me. You just gotta be with 'em. They don't care how you live; they'd rather be with you in a furnished room than with out you in a mansion. No kiddin'.

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Here I am just talkin' on. I don't even know what you want me to tellya. But if it's about goin' back in the past, I'll be truthful with you. I don't like to do that. There's nothin' in it but heartaches. I had what most people never even dream of havin'. Now, all I want to do is keep on my feet.

The project could be wonderful for all of us here, even with the little salary, if only you could keep busy all the time. But, honey, they're always stopping you for some reason! You never know how long you're gonna work, or if you play Friday night. It ain't that the

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public don't want to see us. 'Cause when I wuz with the Caravan I usta love to look out in the audience. And the kids had shining faces. Some of them never seen a show before. But something always interferes. It's the government being afraid to hurt the private businesses. Well, what would happen to all these variety performers if the Government didn't hire them. The theatres don't want vaudeville back. You see what it is, honey? Why should they have to worry about stage hands, and electricians and publicity agents and scenery and handlers. They get it all manufactured in cans, like soup, and the audience is satisfied enough with what they get. But, if we could really operate every night, and CHARGE admission, why, honey, I bet there would be enough money comin' back to us to keep this thing goin'.